

# News from the FPPC



California Fair Political Practices Commission  
428 J Street, Suite 620, Sacramento, CA 95814  
[www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov)

For Immediate Release: September 10, 2010

Contact: Roman Porter at (916) 322-7761

## **FPPC Investigations Now Posted Online**

### ***Internet and email key to educating candidates & informing electorate***

In an effort to discourage unlawful behavior by state candidates and campaigns, Dan Schnur, Chairman of the Fair Political Practices Commission, California's campaign finance watchdog, announced that the names of those politicians and campaign committees under investigation by the Commission's Enforcement Division will be posted daily on its website at [www.fppc.ca.gov](http://www.fppc.ca.gov), beginning Monday, September 13, 2010.

"A headline in October is a much greater deterrent to unlawful behavior than a fine in March," said Schnur. "I hope candidates of both parties will instruct their consultants to err on the side of caution rather than engaging in borderline illegal behavior, so they can avoid the prospect of the public and media focusing their attention on an investigation into possible violations of the state's campaign laws."

Previously, the Commission only released this information when requested, and then only pursuant to a Public Records Act request for documents. The FPPC will now post the complaint that led to an investigation and the letter sent to both the complaining party and subject of the complaint, informing them that an investigation is under way. The decision to open an investigation does not presume the guilt or innocence of the accused.

"The public's right to know about a complaint deemed serious enough to warrant investigation by Commission staff should not be determined by the resourcefulness of a reporter or the personal connections of a political rival. Beginning Monday, these efforts will standardize this process of publicly acknowledging investigations and ensures that all persons complained of are treated equitably," said Schnur.

Enforcement Division staff has nearly eliminated a persistent backlog of older cases, which provides the division with greater capacity to more quickly address allegations. Additional efforts are underway to allow staff to make enforcement decisions while the campaign in question is still in progress, rather than months or years after an election.

—more—

“Political consultants in both parties too often engage in borderline behavior under the assumption that being fined in the months after the election is the worst thing that can happen to their candidate. Well, that’s not the worst thing that can happen,” said Schnur. “Before you step too close to the line, ask your candidate if he or she would like their name in a headline along with the words ‘FPPC’ and ‘investigation’ in the weeks before an election.”

In order to discourage campaigns filing frivolous charges against their opponents in attempts to attract media coverage, Schnur promised to publicly castigate those campaigns that filed complaints under penalty of perjury that the Commission’s Enforcement Division determined were without merit. In particularly egregious cases, the matter would be referred to the District Attorney for possible criminal charges.

“I understand the temptation this new approach provides to campaigns to file complaints without any evidence whatsoever against their opponent in order to attract a quick headline,” said Schnur. “But they should understand that I will go to the district in question and announce that the candidate who has filed these baseless charges has wasted thousands of dollars of taxpayer’s money in order to avoid a public discussion of the issues that matter to the voters.”

Under Schnur’s direction, Commission staff has undertaken several efforts in recent months to utilize the internet and email as low-cost methods to inform and educate elected and appointed officials across the state of their responsibilities. The use of email, YouTube and webinars provides an opportunity for treasurers, candidates and officeholders to ask questions or learn about their requirements outside of the hours the Commission’s toll-free advice line is staffed.

“I promised when I took this job that we would do everything we could to provide the necessary information and guidance so that participants in the political process understood what type of behavior would and would not be permitted over the course of the campaign season. Commission staff has done an outstanding job of expanding the resources available to provide that guidance,” said Schnur. “I also issued a warning for those people who still chose to step over the line: ‘We’re going to make you famous.’”

“And now, that’s just what we’re going to do.”

# # #